

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Malcolm X 1965 visit to Selma strengthened Black rights fight
— PAGES 6-7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 6 FEBRUARY 23, 2015

‘Cuba’s sovereignty not up for negotiation’

BY JOHN STUDER

“The United States has not altered its strategic objectives toward Cuba,” Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, head of Cuba’s North American Bureau of the Foreign Ministry and chief delegate in talks with U.S. government representatives on steps toward diplomatic relations, said in a Cuban television interview Feb. 2. “What has changed are the forms, the tactics.”

“And we’re not going to negotiate issues of a domestic nature, of Cuban sovereignty, in exchange for lifting the blockade,” she said.

A second round of talks between Cuban and U.S. representatives is scheduled for later in February. The talks are the result of an agreement announced simultaneously by U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro Dec. 17 under which Cuba released two U.S. agents and Washington released the three remaining members of the Cuban Five after 16 years in U.S. prisons for defending the Cuban Revolution.

Washington’s punishing 54-year embargo against Cuba has caused de-

Continued on page 2

Berlin, Paris keep squeeze on Greece, workers suffer

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Campaigning as a champion of easing the unemployment and economic hardship imposed on Greek workers in 2012 by Berlin, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, Alexis Tsipras used Greek nationalist and anti-German rhetoric to lead the Coalition of the Radical Left party, known by its acronym Syriza, to power in the Jan. 25 elections.

Continued on page 9

The Future of Railroads: Safety, Workers, Community & the Environment Building a Labor-Community Alliance Around Rail Safety

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Chicago socialist mayor candidate calls for solidarity with oil strike



Militant/Linda Avers

Dan Fein, right, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Chicago mayor, joins oil workers picket line in Whiting, Indiana, Feb. 8. “Working people need to take political power,” Fein said.

BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO — Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Chicago, is kicking the socialist campaign into high gear heading towards the Feb. 24 election here. Over the last few days, Fein visited workers on Chicago’s southeast side; attended the Illinois Farmers Union convention in Altamont; joined striking oil workers

on the picket line in Whiting, Indiana; and spoke on the challenges facing working farmers at a Feb. 8 Militant Labor Forum here.

Fein and a team of socialist campaigners went door to door Feb. 5 in a large high-rise apartment building in southeast Chicago.

“The Socialist Workers Party starts

Continued on page 4

Support grows as national oil workers strike spreads

Safety of workers, communities key issue



Militant

Feb. 7 rally, Carson, Calif. Oil workers’ biggest safety concern is fatigue, caused by bosses’ insistence on 12-hour shifts, forced overtime. Solidarity rallies were held at dozens of refineries.

BY BOB SAMSON

TEXAS CITY, Texas — Spirited rallies at dozens of refineries around the country Feb. 7 drew several thousand oil workers and supporters as a nationwide strike centered on safety entered its second week. Some 1,400

members of the United Steelworkers union at two BP facilities in Ohio and Indiana joined the walkout the following day, adding to the 3,800 already on the picket lines at nine plants in Texas, California, Kentucky and

Continued on page 5

NY rail crash kills 6, Gov. Cuomo says safe crossings are ‘too costly’

BY NAOMI CRAINE

NEW YORK — In the deadliest accident in Metro-North Railroad’s history, a commuter train slammed into an SUV at a crossing in Val-

halla, N.Y., Feb. 3, dragging the car 1,000 feet and setting them both on fire, killing Ellen Brody, the driver, and five train passengers. While media reports have placed the blame on the driver for finding herself on the tracks, many rail workers and others say the crossing where the crash took place was unsafe and the fault lies with the state-run railroad.

The morning after the disaster New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo told a CBS news show, “Sometimes there

Continued on page 9

Does ‘broken windows’ policy cause police brutality?

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — In the wake of protests against the killing of Eric Garner after cops in Staten Island put him in a chokehold, many working people are discussing what can be done to end

COMMENTARY

police brutality. Some participants in the protests argue that the problem is New York cops’ “broken windows” policing. This is a necessary debate for working people seeking a road forward.

Broken windows gets its name

Continued on page 4

Inside

EDITORIAL: All out to back striking oil workers! 9

Ukraine workers hard hit by war, economic crisis 3

CP debate asks why did USSR fall, what does it mean today? 8

—On the picket line, p. 5—

West Coast port bosses threaten lockout of longshore union

British Columbia port truckers confront new attacks

Cuba defends sovereignty

Continued from front page
cades of economic isolation and difficulties, exacerbated after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, which had been Cuba’s main trading partner. Washington now seeks to take advantage of the toll wrought on Cuban workers and farmers by the embargo to interfere more directly in social relations on the island.

Vidal’s television interview came after both Fidel and Raúl Castro had made it clear there will be no progress toward normalizing relations until Washington lifts its embargo; returns Guantánamo, home of the U.S. naval base, back to Cuba; and respects Cuba’s sovereignty.

“U.S. government spokespeople have been very clear in specifying that they are now changing their methods but not their policy objectives and insist on continuing to intervene in our internal affairs, which we are not going to accept,” said Raúl Castro in a Jan. 28 speech to the Third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Cristina Escobar, the TV interviewer, noted that U.S. diplomats and the media talk as if “Cuba has to do things to please the interests of the United States, so as to have the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with them.”

“Relations between Cuba and the United States have been historically asymmetrical,” Vidal replied.

“There are a lot more things to dismantle on the part of the United States than on the part of Cuba,” she said, “because in Cuba we don’t have sanctions against U.S. businesses or citizens. Nor do we have occupied territory in the United States that we could

trade for the occupied territory at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo.”

At a White House press briefing four days earlier, reporters asked Josh Earnest, Obama’s press secretary, “Is it the president’s intention when he finally does close the Guantánamo facility to give back the actual territory to Cuba?”

Earnest answered with an emphatic, “No.”

“We don’t have programs financed from Cuba aimed at influencing the situation inside the U.S.,” Vidal continued. “We don’t have especially designed illegal radio and television broadcasts from Cuba to the U.S.”

The U.S. government has insisted that when embassies are opened, their personnel should have freedom of movement, Vidal said, “but it is very important that the behavior of U.S. diplomats in Havana changes.”

Today, she said, “they encourage, organize, train, supply and finance elements inside our country who act against the interests of our state, against the interests of the Cuban government and people.”

“Our diplomats in Washington behave impeccably,” she said, “and would never take any kind of action that could be interpreted by the U.S. government as interfering in their internal affairs.”

“A solution to the economic difficulties that have affected us will not be found until the day the blockade is totally ended,” Vidal said when asked what she thought the outcome of the negotiations will be. “I think we’re being quite realistic in our approach and our appreciation of the circumstances, to try to advance as far as possible in the solution to these problems.”

Books by Cuban Five introduced in Havana



AIN/Tony Hernández Mena

Drawings by Gerardo Hernández: Humor From My Pen, a book of drawings, cartoons and commentary related to the frame-up and long imprisonment of the Cuban Five for their “crime” of defending the Cuban Revolution, was presented in Havana Feb. 2.

“It’s a compilation of cartoons I made while I was in prison,” Hernández, right, said at the book launching ceremony at the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Kenia Serrano, center, president of ICAP, presided.

Manuel López, left, coordinator of the Committee for the Freedom of the Five in Ukraine, the organization that prepared and paid for the printing, said the text was prepared in Kiev by Ukrainians, Argentines, Venezuelans and others, and published in October 2014, two months before Hernández, Antonio Guerrero and Ramón Labañino were released to return to Cuba. René González and Fernando González, the other two of the Five, had been released in 2013 and 2014. The Five and their families attended the launch.

During the discussion Guerrero held up a copy of *Absolved by Solidarity, 16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment of the Cuban Five*, a new book featuring recent artwork Guerrero painted in prison. The bilingual Spanish-English book, published by Pathfinder Press, will be presented at the 24th Havana International Book Fair Feb. 17. The book fair, attended each year by hundreds of thousands, will run from Feb. 12 through Feb. 22, then travel across the rest of the island.

Humor From My Pen can be purchased at amazon.com. *Absolved by Solidarity* is available at pathfinderpress.com.

— MAGGIE TROWE

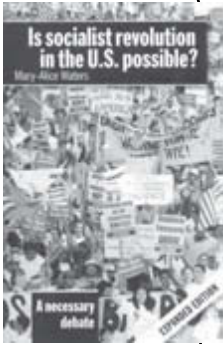
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Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

by Mary-Alice Waters

Explains why revolutionary struggles by working people are inevitable, initiated not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the employing class’s crisis-driven assaults on our living standards and job conditions — on our very humanity. As solidarity grows among a fighting vanguard of working people, the outlines of coming class battles can already be seen. \$7

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THE MILITANT

Fight attacks on prisoners’ right to free speech

The ‘Militant’ champions fight against Pennsylvania gag law allowing government or anyone who says they suffer ‘mental anguish’ because of a crime to shut down inmates’ right to free speech to discuss their case, prison conditions or world politics.



Militant/Wendy Lyons

2014 rally one year after hunger strike by Calif. prisoners against solitary confinement.

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Ukraine workers hard hit by war, economic collapse

BY NAOMI CRAINE

The escalating war in eastern Ukraine, combined with an accelerating economic crisis that the country's bosses and government are trying to resolve at workers' expense, is having a punishing effect throughout Ukraine. In this situation, layers of workers are trying to find ways to simultaneously defend Ukraine's national sovereignty, their livelihoods and the country's industrial capacity.

The Ukrainian currency, the hryvnia, fell 50 percent against the dollar in two days, Feb. 5-6. Government ministers are scrambling to restructure the country's debts and secure new loans from the International Monetary Fund, which demands more "austerity" from workers as the price.

The government has not resolved the widespread problem of unpaid wages, despite protests by miners from across the country in Kiev Jan. 28-29. Mykhailo Volynets, chair of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, which called the actions, issued a statement Feb. 9 rejecting a memorandum prepared by a commission the government set up following the protests.

"The minister of energy reported that half of the trade unions signed, which is true," Volynets said. "I did not sign because it does not specify a schedule of payments. It has no calculations, no numbers." He noted that it does not include paying back wages prior to December. "Rescue Service crews have not received pay for August to November," he said.

The draft memorandum has lines for

signatures from representatives of various government bodies, several different miners unions, administrators of the state-owned mines, and by DTEK, the giant private coal and energy company owned by billionaire Rinat Akhmetov.

In addition to abstract promises to pay some back wages, the memorandum includes special concessions to DTEK, which owns a lot of Ukraine's electrical power plants, to buy coal from state-owned mines at a discount, as well as authorizing the company to import foreign coal "if necessary." The miners have been fighting to stop coal imports and cancel plans to close state-owned mines, defending workers' jobs and crucial energy resources.

DTEK mines account for nearly half of Ukraine's coal production. The largest are in Pavlograd, 90 miles from the capital of the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Donetsk.

Akhmetov, whose main base of operation is in eastern Ukraine, was a major backer of Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Moscow president of Ukraine who was forced to resign a year ago amid mass popular protests. When pro-Russian separatists began seizing territory, Akhmetov opposed them in what the *Kiev Post* at the time described as a "business decision."

Intensified fighting in east

One of the key battles taking place between Ukrainian government forces, backed by volunteer brigades, and the pro-Moscow separatists, backed by Russian troops and weapons, is over the town of Debaltseve. Capturing the



Working-class neighborhood in Mariupol, Ukraine, hit by separatist shelling Jan. 24. In face of escalating war, economic crisis, workers seek ways to defend sovereignty and livelihoods.

rail hub would give the various separatist forces in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions a more contiguous area under their control.

During a cease-fire Feb. 6 for evacuation of civilians, about 600 chose Kiev-controlled areas outside the war zone, and 50 went to separatist-held areas. More than 2,000 said they would stay.

Ukrainian forces have launched an effort to regain ground outside Mariupol, a port city of 500,000 on the coast of the Sea of Azov between the Russian border and the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Moscow last March.

More than 5,300 have been killed over the past 10 months, with casualties rising since the latest separatist offensive began in mid-January. The war is being fought largely with artillery, with most of the shelling hitting working-class districts.

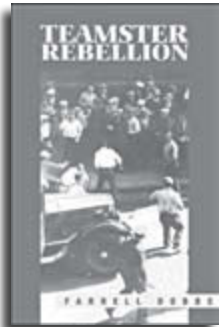
A summit meeting on a proposal for a cease-fire in Ukraine was scheduled

for Feb. 11 in Minsk, Belarus, by officials from Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine. Some U.S. politicians, including Republican Sen. John McCain and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, have called for Washington to provide weapons to Kiev. President Barack Obama said that "the possibility of lethal defensive weapons is one of those options that's being examined."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel made clear she would oppose providing weapons to the Ukrainian government, saying it would escalate the conflict. After meeting with Merkel in Washington, Obama said he would postpone any decision on providing weapons until after the Minsk meeting.

Russian officials announced Feb. 10 that about 2,000 Russian soldiers would carry out monthlong exercises along the border with eastern Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin's denials that Moscow is sending fighters and weapons to back the separatists sound increasingly hollow, especially with some of the fighters on the combat fronts pointedly telling reporters they come from Russia.

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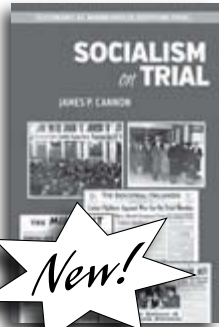


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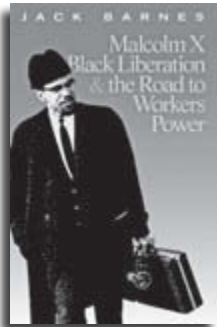
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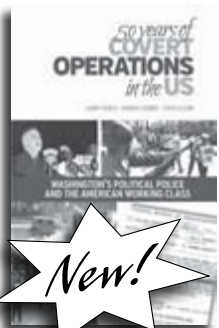
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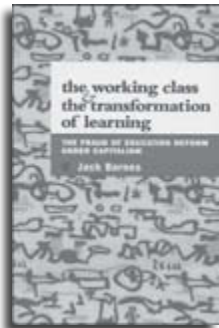
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Safety Is at the Heart of Workers Struggles: Oil Refineries, Docks, Railroads and Hospitals. Speakers: Ben Fields, United Steelworkers Local 5; Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Feb. 21, 7 p.m. 4804 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Working-Class Fight Against Anti-Semitism and Jew-Hatred. Sat., Feb. 28, 7 p.m. 143 Kennedy St. NW, Suite 15. Tel.: (202) 536-5080.

CANADA

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Keystone XL Pipeline Debate Ignores Energy Needs of World's Toilers. Speakers: François Bradette and Michel Dugré, Communist League. Sat., Feb. 21, 4 p.m. 636 Marlborough Way NE. Tel.: (403) 457-9044.

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Keystone XL Pipeline Debate Ignores Energy Needs of World's Toilers. Speaker: Philippe Tessier, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St.-Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

'Selma' Shows Power of Movement Against Jim Crow in the United States. Speaker: Patrick Brown, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 20, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 188a Onehunga Mall, Onehunga. Tel.: (09) 636-3231.

‘Broken windows’ policing

Continued from front page

from proponents of preventive policing — attempts to keep crime from happening as opposed to sitting back and reacting after crimes have taken place. They say that there is a “connection between one broken window left untended and a thousand broken windows.”

Using foot patrols in working-class communities to clamp down on lesser crimes “such as public drinking and drug use, fights, public urination, and other acts considered to be minor offenses, with responses ranging from warning and referral to summons and arrest” leads to fewer major crimes, and therefore fewer arrests, New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, one of the architects of broken windows, wrote in the Winter 2015 *City Journal* magazine.

“Broken Windows Policing Doesn’t Work: It Also May Have Killed Eric Garner,” proclaimed a headline on the Slate news website in December, pointing to the cops’ claim that Garner had committed a misdemeanor by selling loose cigarettes.

Congressman Hakeem Jeffries also blamed broken windows for Garner’s death. “That philosophy may have made sense 20 years ago when crime was extremely high, but the windows in New York City are largely together, and have been repaired,” Jeffries told PBS NewsHour Dec. 4. “So there’s no reason to engage in the same aggressive approach that had taken place in the past.”

But the truth is large numbers of working people — especially in the Black and Latino community — prefer preventive policing, and for good reason.

Few in New York want to go back to the decades when the cops sat around the donut shop, ignoring crime in the Black and other working-class communities. The only times people there saw the cops was when units like the Tactical Patrol Force, an elite gang steeped in corruption, busted down doors with virtual impunity to rob drug dealers and brutalize any residents who got in their way, in the early 1960s.

It wasn’t until the rise of the mass mobilizations for the overthrow of Jim Crow segregation and the urban rebellions that shook the North that the cops felt compelled to patrol and prosecute crimes committed against people in the Black community.

Working people know police brutality firsthand and don’t like it. They also live with crime and gang violence. They want to know their children will come home safe from school each day and they want to be able to go out and not worry about being mugged or worse.

The killing of Garner from a police chokehold helped fuel some of the largest — and most multinational — demonstrations against police brutality in years, some with significant union participation. The protests, which swept the country from coast to coast, are a

sign of what has been won in struggle in the U.S. over the last several decades. Among working people of all nationalities there is less tolerance for police brutality, less tolerance of cops on the take, less acceptance of racism.

But opponents of police brutality who call for an end to broken windows policing miss the point. The cops carry out whatever form of policing they are ordered to protect and serve the interests of the propertied owners and their profits and to keep working people in our place, treating us with disdain. Their job is to defend the rule of capital, not to solve crimes against working people. As the class struggle heats up, they will break strikes and repress demonstrations.

But working people are not indifferent to the impact different policies and stances have on their day-to-day lives, and their struggles can have an impact on them.

Murder rate declines

Broken windows was implemented in New York subways in 1990 and in the city at large in 1994. Murders in the city peaked with 2,605 in 1990 and have declined almost every year since. The shift to cops patrolling in communities of the oppressed using preventive police policies — under the impact of the rise of the fight for Black rights — is a factor.

Stop and frisk is a different form of preventive policing, based on violation of the constitutional right to be free from unwarranted search and seizure. Under stop and frisk thousands of people, mostly Black youth, were stopped, most of the time for no legitimate reason, searched and then sent on their way. In a small number of cases, weapons or drugs found, or planted, led to arrests.

Before New York City officials cut



Militant/Seth Galinsky

Workers of all nationalities are less tolerant than ever of police brutality, but not indifferent to impact of policing methods on crime. Above, Jan. 19 New York protest against cop violence.

back stop and frisk “I’d get stopped every other day, and for no good reason,” Martin Martinez, an unemployed warehouse worker in Brooklyn, told the *Militant*. After public protests, stop and frisk was cut back at the end of the Michael Bloomberg administration. Since then, Martínez said, he hasn’t been stopped. “It’s both positive and negative,” he said. “There’s more things going on in my neighborhood that shouldn’t be.”

But working people cannot accept restrictions on basic democratic and political rights, whether they’re “effective” in fighting crime or not.

Police brutality is part and parcel of capitalism. While at times it can be pushed back, it cannot be eliminated until a revolutionary movement has advanced far enough to be able to dismantle the police force and replace it with one that serves the interest of working

people, like was done in Cuba and later in Nicaragua, at least in the early years of the Sandinista revolution.

Ties of solidarity among working people are strengthened in times of growing social struggles. Through being drawn into revolutions, like in Cuba in 1959, working people gain a qualitatively different sense of their self-worth and become transformed as the anti-social hold of dog-eat-dog capitalism is shattered.

Over time the need for a police force will wither away. Until then, a revolutionary proletarian government would implement its own kind of preventive policing, but with a different kind of police force — one that defends the interests of working people and is organized as part of broader efforts to integrate everyone into the work of building a new society.

Chicago socialist calls for solidarity with oil strikers

Continued from front page

with how we can advance the common interests of workers and farmers against the blows of capitalism in crisis around the world,” Fein told Kathren Wallace, a retired airline worker. “Moscow sent troops and tanks to Ukraine, where mass mobilizations last year overthrew the regime there after decades of suffering under the Russian boot. I support the Ukrainian workers’ fight to remain free from Russian domination.”

Wallace asked about the killings and beheadings by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

“Workers everywhere scored a victory against Islamic State when the Kurdish people defeated them in Kobani, Syria,” Fein said.

“Islamic State is trying to establish a brutally repressive Islamist capitalist government, but the toilers where they have taken over are resisting,” Fein said. “The Kurds, who have faced national oppression in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey, have led the fight to beat them back.”

“U.S. imperialism is just looking for more control over the resources of the region,” Fein said. “They won’t play a progressive role in the Middle East either.”

Turning to U.S. politics, Fein said, “The Democrats and Republicans are the enemy of working people, they stand against our interests from Illinois to Cuba. We think working people need to take political power.”

“I agree about the rich. They can walk about as if there are no problems,” Wallace said.

“Workers and farmers face the same enemy,” Fein told Lynn and Pat Tappendorf at the Illinois Farmers Union convention Feb. 7. “The ruling propertied families and their drive for profits are responsible for the attacks we both face.”

“Yes, there are only three or four elevators in my county, and they control the prices we get,” agreed Lynn Tappendorf, who grows corn and soybeans on 1,250 acres, with help from his wife, Pat, and his son Simon.

Fein explained how the Socialist Workers Party is urging workers, farmers and others to join in solidarity with refinery workers on strike against BP in Whiting and other refineries across the country. “This is the first national oil workers strike since 1980, and the key issue is safety on the job.”

“The SWP joined the big farm protests and tractorcades to Washington, D.C., in 1980 too,” Fein said.

“I remember that,” Lynn Tappendorf said. “I was only 15 years old. I was in high school. I didn’t go, but I remember it.”

The Tappendorfs got a subscription to the *Militant* and invited Fein to come down to their farm to continue the discussion.

Fein joins oil workers pickets

The following morning Fein joined members of United Steelworkers Local 7-1 on strike at the Whiting refin-

ery. Nearly 1,100 workers there along with oil workers at 10 other plants nationwide walked out over safety and forced overtime. Strikers gave Fein a ride from the union hall to one of the 12 picket lines. The shuttle driver got out and introduced Fein as a mayoral candidate there to support the strike.

“Safety is an issue that only the workers will seriously fight for. Your strike deserves the support of all working people,” Fein said. “Yesterday I spoke with farmers in Illinois and told them they had a stake in your struggle.”

That afternoon Fein joined Randy Jasper, a grain farmer from Muscoda, Wisconsin, at a Militant Labor Forum in Chicago to speak on the need for family farmers and workers to build a fighting alliance against attacks from the propertied rulers.

Advancing the worldwide struggle for socialism necessitates closing the enormous gap between social conditions facing working people in imperialist countries and in the semi-colonial world, Fein said. Fighting to expand electrification there to allow for reading, culture and collaboration after the sun goes down is a precondition for advancing working-class solidarity and common battles.

Jasper, who has visited Cuba three times in recent years, said he saw for himself how revolutionary Cuba is an example for U.S. farmers. Farming there is organized to provide food for the population, he said, not to make profits.

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

West Coast port bosses threaten lockout of longshore union

LOS ANGELES — West Coast port bosses expanded a “mini-lockout” against members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union here Feb. 6 in an effort to force the union to accept their new contract offer. A number of issues key to dockworkers remain unresolved — including how to deal with arbitration over safety questions.

The dockworkers' contract expired July 1. The Pacific Maritime Association, the organization that represents shipping companies and port operators, has drastically cut night shift crews since the beginning of the year.

“They locked us out on nightside,” Bobby Olvera, president of ILWU Local 13, told a rally of 6,000 union supporters in San Pedro Jan. 22. “It’s a mini-lockout.”

One worker told the *Militant*, “I was getting out five times a week. Now I’m getting out twice.”

A Feb. 6 bulletin from ILWU Local 13 in Los Angeles and Long Beach reported an escalation in the lockout. “This morning at negotiations, PMA President and CEO Jim McKenna informed the Coast Negotiating Team that the PMA Board of Directors has decided that from 5:00 p.m. Friday (February 6, 2015) to 8:00 a.m. Monday (February 9, 2015) no vessel labor will be ordered on the entire West Coast with the exception of dock work, rail work, military, perishables and cruise ships. A worker at the union dispatch hall in nearby Wilmington said that normally 900 to 1,000 jobs are dispatched on the weekend, but this weekend there were only 150.

Port bosses have accused the unionists of carrying out a West Coast slowdown, pointing to ships waiting to be unloaded. The union countered with photographs posted on its website showing sufficient space for thousands of containers on the docks, and blamed the port bosses for a shortage of truck chassis and the rail bosses for a shortage of trains as a result of an increase in oil transport.

The Pacific Maritime Association Feb. 4 made an updated proposal for a five-year contract, with concessions on a number of issues, including a 14 percent pay increase over five years, continuing to pay 100 percent for health care and granting union jurisdiction over maintenance and repair of truck chassis. Several key issues remain unresolved.

That day McKenna predicted a port shutdown within days if the contract is not agreed to.

“The employers’ threat to shut down West Coast ports is a reckless and unnecessary move,” responded ILWU President Robert McEllrath. “What the ILWU heard yesterday is a man who makes about \$1 million a year telling the working class that we have more than our share.”

—Bill Arth

British Columbia port truckers confront new attacks

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Some 600 members of the United Truckers Association, a group that represents 1,200 union and nonunion truck drivers, met in nearby Surrey Jan. 27 to discuss how to respond to the announcement by the Port of Vancouver that 600 truckers would be laid off Feb. 1 with no regard to seniority.

This was their second meeting in two weeks in opposition to attacks on gains they won in a strike last March.

That strike won significant raises for hourly paid truck drivers, and a rate hike and compensation for waiting time for owner-operators who are paid by the load.

“I’ve lost my license to work at the port,” Thang Nguyen, a trucker, told the *Militant* at the meeting. “How do I support my kids?”

“They made a deal and they lied,” said Lawson Lam, an owner-operator, at the protest. “We might as well shut the port down.”

At the meeting Paul Johal, president of the Unifor-Vancouver Container Truckers’ Association, the largest union organizing Vancouver port drivers, asked that no action be taken for two days to give the port the opportunity to agree to the truckers’ demands.

The drivers at the meeting decided to organize a caravan of several hundred trucks the next day from Surrey to Vancouver, and some 300 truckers and supporters rallied in Surrey Jan. 31.

“If truckers are going to be laid off it should be by seniority,” Albert Singh, a port trucker for 25 years, told the *Militant* at the Jan. 31 rally. “The port shouldn’t be able to pick and choose. It’s unjust.”

—Mike Barker and Steve Penner



Militant/John Naubert

Picket line of United Steelworkers union strikers and supporters in front of Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Washington, Feb. 7.



Militant/Cathy Jackson

Rally in front of Shell headquarters in Houston Feb. 6. Randy Rodriguez, right, holds photo of his father-in-law, Ray Gonzalez, burned to death in fire at refinery in Texas City in 2004.

Oil workers strike wins support

Continued from front page

Washington. This is the biggest strike of refinery workers in 35 years.

Four refineries are on strike in the Houston area, the largest U.S. oil refining hub.

“Marathon wants to completely run and direct safety,” Dale Battiste, a 27-year veteran at the plant and co-chair of the union safety committee, told the *Militant*, as 300 rallied in front of the company’s corporate office here.

“For them, it’s about profit over lives,” said Bill Patton, a pipefitter at Marathon Oil.

“It’s a lie,” Leslie Dillon said on the picket line, commenting on the safety sign you see as you enter the refinery. “I’ve been a firefighter and paramedic for 16 years and carried bodies out of there.” A massive explosion at the refinery here in 2005 killed 15 workers and injured more than 100 workers and nearby residents.

Randy Rodriguez said his father-in-law, Ray Gonzalez, was burned to death at the refinery here in 2004. Rodriguez came to a rally of 250 at the Shell headquarters in downtown Houston Feb. 6 carrying a photo of his father-in-law and a sign saying, “My Dad lost his life at work. A fair contract saves lives.”

A contingent of rail workers extended their solidarity at the rally as well. They discussed the push by rail bosses to reduce train crews to one person. Unionists came from the International Longshoremen’s Association, Communications Workers of America and United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

‘Biggest safety concern is fatigue’

“Our biggest safety concern is fatigue,” said Chris Sharpe, who works at the coker unit at LyondellBassell and is vice president of the union local. “They refuse to hire more people so we’re forced to work 13 days in a row, 12 hours a day, then one day off. It’s been like that since Thanksgiving.”

The struck refineries account for 13 percent of U.S. refining capacity. The oil bosses are operating all but one with management and strikebreaking contractors. Plants not on strike are operating under daily contract extensions.

“This strike is NOT about money, this is about addressing safety issues that have been ignored for way too long. 138 workers were killed on the job while extracting, producing or supporting oil and gas in 2012,” striking BP workers in Toledo, Ohio, posted on their Facebook page after they joined the strike at 12:01

a.m. Feb. 8.

“We had almost 300 at the main gate” for the Feb. 7 rally, Dave Martin, vice president of Steelworkers Local 8-719 at the Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, said in an email to the *Militant*. “We still had our other three gates and the hall manned. Union members from several other locals came — utility workers, locomotive engineers, bricklayers, service and communications workers and other USW locals.”

In Carson, California, south of Los Angeles, more than 1,000 marched a mile from a community park near the USW Local 675 union hall to the Tesoro refinery to support the strike there. “We’re fighting for safety not just for us but for the community,” George Leon, 40, a striking operator, told the *Militant*. “Any catastrophe releases its effects on the community, not just on us inside.”

In northern California at the Tesoro refinery in Martinez, several hundred swelled the picket lines outside the plant. One handmade sign read “Standby Don’t Fly,” a protest against the company forcing workers to be on unpaid standby even on their days off.

Solidarity rallies across country

In El Dorado, Kansas, more than 100 Steelworkers and others gathered in solidarity with the strike. “We are not on strike at this refinery, but we won’t sign any agreement until the national issues are settled,” Robert Cammarn, president of USW Local 241, told the *Militant*.

Steelworkers in the Philadelphia area organized rallies at refineries in South Philadelphia; Trainor, Pennsylvania; and Delaware City, Delaware. At the Philadelphia Energy Solutions plant, Local 10-1 President Jim Savage, a member of the national bargaining committee, told the *Militant*, “The oil bosses are so arrogant. When we raise concerns over forced overtime, they say we’re not going to tell them how to run their refineries.”

In all, the union’s website reported solidarity actions at more than 200 plants and refineries.

Ellie Garcia in Carson, California; John Naubert in Anacortes, Washington; Linda Avers in Whiting, Indiana; Mitchel Rosenberg in Philadelphia; Eric Simpson, Betsey Stone and Gerardo Sánchez in Martinez, California; Andy Parkhurst and Julie Anderson in El Dorado, Kansas; and Anne Parker in Chicago contributed to this article.

Malcolm X's February 1965 visit to Selma strengthened fight for Black rights

Encouraged young Black rights fighters to broaden their scope and see their place in worldwide battle for change, from Africa to Alabama

The new movie “Selma,” reviewed in last week’s issue of the *Militant*, has sparked interest in the legacy of the victorious fight to overthrow Jim Crow segregation in the 1950s and ‘60s. The film tells the story of the campaign in Selma, Alabama, in early 1965 that forced officials there to remove obstacles to the right of Blacks to vote and led to the passage of the federal Voting Rights Act later that year. In Dallas County, where Selma was located, less than 1 percent of the Black population had been registered to vote.

The civil rights fighters in Selma, including thousands of high school students and younger, stood firm in face of brutal violence, including beatings and fire hose blasts by Selma and state police and attacks by racist thugs.

Martin Luther King Jr.’s strategy of reliance on the “good will” of Democratic Party politicians like President Lyndon Johnson and refusal to countenance protesters defending themselves against racist terror was increasingly controversial among many Black rights fighters. King was in the city jail when, at the invitation of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee members, Malcolm X came to Selma for a one-day visit, speaking to the press and a public

meeting of young people Feb. 4, 1965. Last week’s film review noted that “Selma” distorted and omitted aspects of Malcolm’s visit. To fill in the gaps and let Malcolm speak for himself, the *Militant* is publishing an excerpt from *Malcolm X, Black Liberation and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, the Spanish edition of which is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month in February. In the excerpt from the chapter “Malcolm X: Revolutionary Leader of the Working Class,” Barnes explains what Malcolm X posed in Selma. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

In addition we are reprinting Malcolm’s exchange with the press there and a major excerpt of his speech later that day, both taken from *February 1965: The Final Speeches*. Copyright © 1992 by Betty Shabazz and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

A Malcolm-Martin convergence?

BY JACK BARNES

In early February 1965, Malcolm spoke to a group of three hundred young people at a local church in Selma, Alabama. Since the beginning of 1965, King’s organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), had been leading voting rights demonstrations in and around Selma, in the course of which protesters had been subjected to cop brutality and some 3,400 had been arrested. After Malcolm had addressed a meeting of several thousand on February 3 at nearby Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, students there insisted that he go with them to Selma the next day, and Malcolm agreed. King was being held in jail in Selma at the time.

When he spoke to the young people in Selma, Malcolm again condemned the Johnson administration for its refusal to deploy federal troops to protect Blacks fighting for their rights. Malcolm said he was “100 percent for the effort being put forth by the Black folks here” and believed “they have an absolute right to use whatever means are necessary to gain the vote.” But he added that he didn’t believe in practicing nonviolence in face of violence by organized racist forces. He concluded: “I pray that you will grow intellectually, so that you can understand the problems of the world and where you fit into, in that world picture” — once again the internationalist starting point, “broadening your scope,” that Malcolm was always working to promote. And then he continued:

“And I pray that all the fear that has ever been in your heart will be taken out, and when you look at that man, if you know he’s nothing but a coward, you won’t fear him. If he wasn’t a coward, he wouldn’t gang up on you. ... They put on a sheet so you won’t know who they are — that’s a coward. No! The time will come when that sheet will be ripped off.



AP photo
Malcolm X told youth in Selma Feb. 4, 1965, above, he was “100 percent for the effort being put forth by the Black folks” protesting there and “they have an absolute right to use whatever means are necessary to gain the vote.” Youth insisted Malcolm speak over objections from Martin Luther King Jr.

If the federal government doesn’t take it off, we’ll take it off.”

What Malcolm had to say about the struggles in St. Augustine, Selma, and elsewhere reminds me of Che Guevara’s answer, during his visit to New York in December 1964, in reply to a question about how he saw the Black rights struggle in the United States. “It seems that racial violence is rampant in some U.S. states,” Che replied. “In face of that, different responses are possible. You can crouch a little more to see if the blow hurts less. You can protest vigorously and then receive more blows. Or you can answer blow for blow. But that’s easy to say; it’s very difficult to do. And you must prepare in order to do that.”

The young people in Selma met Malcolm’s talk with uproarious applause. But that wasn’t the response of SCLC leaders. Malcolm described *their* reaction in a speech to a February 15 meeting of the OAAU [Organization of Afro-American Unity] at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, less than a week before he was gunned down in that same hall.

“King’s man didn’t want me to talk to [the youth],” Malcolm said. Malcolm was referring in particular to the current Democratic Party mayor of this very city, Andrew Young — a former U.S. congressman from here, and also U.S. ambassador to the United Nations during the Carter administration. In Selma that day, Young had schemed unsuccessfully with Coretta Scott King to stop Malcolm from being given a microphone.

“They told me they didn’t mind me coming in and all of that,” Malcolm told the OAAU meeting — but they didn’t want him to talk, because “they knew what I was going to say.” The young people, both from Selma and from Tuskegee, however, “insisted that I be heard. ... This is the only way I got a chance to talk to them.”

You don’t have to take Malcolm’s word for it. King, who was in jail when Malcolm was in Selma, said, shortly after the assassination: “I couldn’t block

his coming, but my philosophy was so antithetical to the philosophy of Malcolm X — so diametrically opposed, that I would never have invited Malcolm X to come to Selma when we were in the midst of a nonviolent demonstration, and this says nothing about the personal respect I had for him. I disagreed with his philosophy and his methods.”

And in a column for the Harlem-based weekly *Amsterdam News*, written a few weeks after Malcolm’s assassination, King wrote that when his wife Coretta had spoken with Malcolm in Selma, Malcolm had “expressed an interest in working more closely with the non-violent movement, but he was not yet able to renounce violence and overcome the bitterness which life had invested in him. ... Like the murder of [Patrice] Lumumba, the murder of Malcolm X deprives the world of a potentially great leader. I could not agree with either of these men. ...”

So, no, there was not a “Malcolm-



At beginning of 1965, less than 1 percent of Blacks in Selma area were registered to vote. Campaign for voting rights was met by brutal assaults by police and racist thugs. By early February some 3,400 protesters had been arrested, including students above. Right, police attack marchers on Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965. Mass actions exposed Washington worldwide, forcing passage of Voting Rights Act.

Martin” convergence during that last year. To the contrary, the divergence widened, as there was a clarification of Martin Luther King’s conviction that capitalism and its injustices could be reformed. Meanwhile, Malcolm never stopped advancing in his commitment to the need for the oppressed and working people of all skin colors, continents, and countries to join together in revolutionary struggle against the capitalist world order responsible for racism, rightist violence, the oppression of women, economic exploitation, and war.

Malcolm X: Why I came to Selma

Remarks to the Press

QUESTION: Why are you here today?
MALCOLM X: Well, I spoke at Tuskegee last night and many of the students invited me to come up here today. Yes. I was at Tuskegee last night to speak on the Black revolution and to stress the relationship between the Black revolution that’s taking place in Africa with

the Black revolution that’s taking place here in America. And many of the students, after the lecture, invited me to come here this morning. And since I’ve been invited to attend a congress of African organizations in London over the weekend and to represent the plight of the Black man in this country to those people over there, I thought I would pass through Selma and get a good, closer look at the condition of our people in this country, so that I’ll be in a better position to describe it when I get over there.

QUESTION: Are you going to be down in the building this morning?

MALCOLM X: Which building?

QUESTION: The County Building.

MALCOLM X: I’d rather not say right now what I’m going to do. But I’m going to do, while I’m here, whatever will produce some positive and constructive results.

I might point out that I am 100 percent for any effort put forth by Black people in this country to have access to the ballot. And I frankly believe that since the ballot is our right, that we are within our right to use whatever means is necessary to secure those rights. And I think that the people in this part of the world would do well to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King and give him what he’s asking for, and give it to him fast, before some other factions come along and try to do it another way. What he’s asking for is right. That’s the ballot. And if he can’t get it the way he’s trying to get it, then it’s going to be gotten, one way or the other.

QUESTION: Are you in agreement with Dr. King’s nonviolent—

MALCOLM X: I don’t believe in any kind of nonviolence. I believe that it’s right to be nonviolent with people who are nonviolent. But when you’re dealing with an enemy who doesn’t know what nonviolence is, as far as I’m concerned you’re wasting your time.

QUESTION: Are you saying that non-violence ought to be abandoned here in Selma now?

MALCOLM X: Whatever means will get results in Selma is the means that should be used. Dr. King and his fol-



lowers are very intelligently trying to impress the people of this area that they should give the Black man the right to vote. Now, if the people in this area are not intelligent enough themselves to recognize what they consider an intelligent approach, then I think the intelligence of the Black people in this area will compel them to devise another method that will get results.

The house Negro and the field Negro

Excerpts from Malcolm X’s Feb. 4, 1965, speech in Selma.

If the federal government does not find it within its power and ability to investigate a criminal organization such as the Klan, then you and I are within our rights to wire Secretary-General U Thant of the United Nations and charge the federal government in this country, behind Lyndon B. Johnson, with being derelict in its duty to protect the human rights of twenty-two million Black people in this country. And in their failure to protect our human rights, they are violating the United Nations Charter, and they are not qualified to continue to sit in that international body and talk about what human rights should be done in other countries on this earth. [Applause] ... [Gap in tape]

I have to say this, then I’ll sit down. Back during slavery, when Black people like me talked to the slaves, they didn’t kill ‘em, they sent some old house Negro along behind him to undo what he said. You have to read the history of slavery to understand this.

There were two kinds of Negroes. There was that old house Negro and the field Negro. And the house Negro always looked out for his master. When the field Negroes got too much out of line, he held them back in check. He put ‘em back on the plantation.

The house Negro could afford to do that because he lived better than the field Negro. He ate better, he dressed better, and he lived in a better house. He lived right up next to his master — in the attic or the basement. He ate the same food his master ate and wore his same clothes. And he could talk just like his master — good diction. And he loved his master more than his master loved himself. That’s why he didn’t want his

master hurt.

If the master got sick, he’d say, “What’s the matter, boss, we sick?” [Laughter] When the master’s house caught afire, he’d try and put the fire out. He didn’t want his master’s house burned. He never wanted his master’s property threatened. And he was more defensive of it than the master was. That was the house Negro.

But then you had some field Negroes, who lived in huts, had nothing to lose. They wore the worst kind of clothes. They ate the worst food. And they caught hell. They felt the sting of the lash. They hated their master. Oh yes, they did.

If the master got sick, they’d pray that the master died. [Laughter and applause] If the master’s house caught afire, they’d pray for a strong wind to come along. [Laughter] This was the difference between the two.

And today you still have house Negroes and field Negroes. [Applause]

I’m a field Negro. If I can’t live in the house as a human being, I’m praying for a wind to come along. If the master won’t treat me right and he’s sick, I’ll tell the doctor to go in the other direction. [Laughter] But if all of us are going to live as human beings, as brothers, then I’m for a society of human beings that can practice brotherhood. [Applause]

But before I sit down, I want to thank you for listening to me. I hope I haven’t put anybody on the spot. I’m not intending to try and stir you up and make you do something that you wouldn’t have done anyway. [Laughter and applause]

I pray that God will bless you in everything that you do. I pray that you will grow intellectually, so that you can understand the problems of the world and where you fit into, in that world picture. And I pray that all the fear that has ever been in your heart will be taken out, and when you look at that man, if you know he’s nothing but a coward, you won’t fear him. If he wasn’t a coward, he wouldn’t gang up on you. He wouldn’t need to sneak around here. [Applause] This is how they function. They function in mobs — that’s a coward. They put on a sheet so you won’t know who they are — that’s a coward.

No! The time will come when that sheet will be ripped off. If the federal government doesn’t take it off, we’ll take it off.

February

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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CP debate asks why did USSR fall, what does it mean today?

BY NAOMI CRAINE

The People's World news website, reflecting the views of the Communist Party USA, recently carried a debate focused on what led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union nearly a quarter century ago. The debate, involving several prominent figures in the CPUSA, offers no new or useful insights on why the party defended the murderous regime of Joseph Stalin until long after his death, but does pose questions important for working people looking for an alternative to capitalism.

In a Dec. 23 article titled "A Season's Reflections on Socialism," Sam Webb, who served as national chairman of the CPUSA from 2000 to 2014, said that it's not enough to blame the "unexpected implosion of the Soviet Union" on its then-President Mikhail Gorbachev, who headed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 until dissolution of the USSR in 1991.

"In the name of building socialism in one country ... Stalin and his acolytes committed crimes on a vast scale," Webb admits. "The command-style, undemocratic structures of political and economic governance were deeply rooted and persisted long after Stalin's death" and "by the 1980s stagnation, exhaustion and cynicism came to define the society."

Rick Nagin, Ohio correspondent for the People's World, wrote a response titled, "Socialist-Minded People Still Need to Discuss Implosion of Soviet Socialism." He argued against minimizing the role of Gorbachev or of Boris Yeltsin, who he says "led a core of corrupted officials of the CPSU to privatize the economy and impose capitalism." Yeltsin served as president of Russia from 1991 to 1999. There was "no evidence of any deep disaffection among the masses of the Soviet people," Nagin claims. "The destruction of the Soviet Union was primarily the handiwork of opportunist and corrupt top-level forces hostile to socialism."

Norman Markowitz, a contributing editor of the CP magazine *Political Affairs*, agreed with Nagin, saying you can't blame "the Stalin leadership for events that took place nearly four decades after Stalin's death."

Emile Schepers, a leader of the CP's work in solidarity with Cuba, stated that more study is needed to analyze what happened, which is challenging because

"we don't have easy access to information available in Russian," nor access to Soviet archives.

This isn't a new question, and there's plenty of information available for working people to study in English — and many other languages — in the writings of V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky and documents of the Socialist Workers Party.

The October 1917 Russian Revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party, brought the workers and peasants of the former czarist empire to power, opening the door to the world's first socialist revolution. The toilers immediately confronted nearly three years of civil war with the landlord and capitalist former rulers and an invasion by 14 imperialist powers, which devastated the economy and took the lives of many of the most conscious worker-Bolsheviks.

Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik Party, led a fight to maintain a revolutionary working-class course in the face of these pressures, including on such key questions as the alliance of workers and peasants, and the fight for a genuinely voluntary union of soviet republics, respecting self-determination for oppressed nations in Ukraine, Georgia and elsewhere. This is documented in *Lenin's Final Fight: Speeches and Writings, 1922-23*.

Following Lenin's death in 1924, Trotsky continued this struggle. But by the early 1930s a political counterrevolution was consolidated by the Stalin-led bureaucracy. What happened under Stalin and his successors were not "mistakes," but the opposite of communism. All political debate was stifled and the working class was driven out of politics through brutal, police-state methods. Thousands of party leaders and other revolutionaries were framed up, sent to the Gulag, or murdered, including Trotsky. Over decades, communist continuity was broken. The "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" was transformed back into the prison house of nations inherited from czarism and imperialism.

This counterrevolutionary cancer ate away at the possibility of a political revolution to reestablish workers and farmers power and the revolutionary policies of Lenin. That made inevitable the implosion of the Soviet Union. The new capitalist classes that have consolidated in Russia, Ukraine and other former So-



Mass meeting of miners from Donbass coalfields in Ukraine, 1989. Strikes there and in Russia brought working class back into politics, opened door for rebirth of revolutionary movement.

viet republics largely came out of layers of the ruling bureaucracy that were in the best position to seize control of former state enterprises and resources.

And its crumbling was hastened by new waves of ferment by miners and other workers and battles for independence in Ukraine and elsewhere, boding well, over time, for the rebirth of the revolutionary movement.

Consequences of fall of USSR

Nagin's article concludes that "the destruction of the USSR has been an unmitigated disaster for humanity."

But the real blows to the working class took place decades before. From the 1930s on the Communist parties that looked to Moscow subordinated the workers' movement and national liberation struggles to the diplomatic interests of the Soviet bureaucracy and the privileged social layer it rested on — the opposite of the internationalist tradition of the Bolsheviks, and that the Cuban Revolution today has exemplified.

The collapse of the USSR opened the possibility for workers there to once again be part of politics and link up with others fighting the bosses across the globe. This is a step forward, not back.

One of the best explanations of this process, and of its consequences for the toilers worldwide, is "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War," a resolution adopted by the Socialist Workers Party in 1990 and published in the magazine

New International.

In the U.S., the CPUSA subordinated the union movement and the working class to the Democratic Party, including helping the employers police the working class to back the U.S. imperialist war effort during World War II.

This class-collaborationist outlook is shared by those involved in this discussion in the CP. Nagin argues that instead of a struggle to overturn capitalism workers need to fight "for the survival of elementary bourgeois democracy," by building "a broad democratic coalition to rout right-wing extremism." By this he means do everything possible to keep channeling workers into the Democratic Party. Nagin himself serves on the County Democratic Party Executive Committee in Cleveland.

What the working class needs today, in the United States and elsewhere, is to organize independently of the capitalist rulers and *all* their political parties. As working people are driven to struggle against the effects of the world capitalist crisis on our jobs and living conditions, on political liberties and to build solidarity with toilers worldwide, we can rebuild a road to taking political power.

These fights will lead working people to study the real lessons of past labor and social battles, and the continuity with the road opened by the Russian Revolution, when workers and farmers used state power to fight for a world based on human solidarity, not class exploitation.

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For further reading

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes

In *New International* issue no. 11 \$16

Lenin's Final Fight

Speeches and Writings, 1922-23. \$20

The Revolution Betrayed

by Leon Trotsky

This classic study of the Soviet workers state and the degeneration of the revolution illuminates the roots of the disintegration of the Soviet bureaucracy and sharpening conflicts in and among the former republics of the USSR. \$20

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All out to back striking oil workers!

More than 5,000 United Steelworkers-organized oil workers on strike at 11 refineries across the country are standing up for safety against the profit-driven oil barons' greed. The strike, now in its second week, is the most important labor battle taking place in the U.S., with an impact around the world.

This is both a labor and a social battle. At its heart is defense of the life and limb of workers on the job and those who live near mines, mills, factories and rail lines, as well as the fight for workers control of conditions on the job. The strikers deserve the vigorous support of all working people.

Spirited rallies Feb. 7 at more than 50 locations across the country drew strikers, other unionists and workers who recognize the strikers are fighting for all working people.

There will be more solidarity actions. *Militant* readers and other class-conscious workers need to spread the word about the stakes of this struggle, win our

unions to mobilize members to reinforce the picket lines, under the discipline of the oil workers, and get messages of support and donations from union locals as well as those who have participated in marches against cop violence and other social struggles.

The oil workers' struggle strengthens battles by other workers as well as social protests — from Walmart workers demanding \$15 an hour and full-time work and rail workers who refuse to accept the one-person "crew" to those standing up against police brutality and for a woman's right to choose abortion.

The class battle in oil points the way forward in the fight to organize and rebuild unions and to demand workers control of production to ensure safety. These in turn advance our class along the road to building a mass international revolutionary working-class movement that can end the dictatorship of capital, establish a workers and farmers government and join in advancing the fight for a socialist world.

Berlin, Paris squeeze Greece, workers suffer

Continued from front page

The Greek government went bankrupt in 2010, buffeted by the sharp contraction of production and trade in 2008 and years of disadvantageous trade relations between southern Europe and the stronger capitalist powers in Berlin and Paris.

When Greece, a member of the EU, appealed for aid, representatives of finance capital — the so-called troika of the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund — issued a euphemistically named "Memorandum of Understanding" assuring payment to some Greek bondholders, while others took a "haircut." In return for loans to the insolvent government, it required massive layoffs of government workers, wage cuts, limits on the right to unionize and steep property taxes that fell hard on workers and farmers.

The European Union is not a country, nor a federation of equals. It is a capitalist alliance with a single currency put together by Berlin and Paris in the 1990s as a counterweight to the domination of U.S. capital. Its members have divergent national interests.

The contradictions built into the EU, deepened by the 2008 world economic contraction, mean a number of weaker capitalist countries — Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain, described contemptuously by capitalist investors as the PIIGS — are being brutalized economically by the stronger European capitalist powers led by Germany.

'Bailout' devastating for workers

The abrupt implementation of massive social spending cuts has been devastating for working people. Some 28 percent of the working-age population in Greece and nearly 60 percent of youth are out of work.

"Greece's dire finances have gutted its health care system," a Feb. 7 *New York Times* article reports. "Universal coverage effectively ended under the austerity measures imposed under the terms of the country's bailout."

Restrictions on unions, layoffs, cutbacks, property taxes and other harsh actions stemmed the growth of government debt, but didn't stop the free fall of production. The country's debt is nearly twice what the toilers produce in a year.

Workers and farmers in Greece have tried to fight back — joining protests, selective national strikes and other actions. But the toilers, misled by Stalinist and social democratic political parties and trade union officials, have had no way to effectively combat the onslaught.

The crisis has led to polarization, and new political forces have pushed aside the Panhellenic Socialists and the New Democracy parties that took turns ruling since 1981. The ultrarightist, anti-immigrant Golden Dawn party has grown, and won 17 seats of 300 in the recent election.

In the context of the crisis, left social-democratic Syriza rose to power. Prime Minister Tsipras, 40, who formed a government by forging a coalition with

the small, right-of-center Independent Greeks Party, campaigned with the slogan, "Hope is coming!"

Tsipras pledged to renegotiate the massive debt and tie repayment to economic growth, create 300,000 new jobs, raise the minimum wage from \$658 to \$853 per month, provide energy and food subsidies, end the tax on heating fuel and abolish the property tax.

'Syriza win will liberate markets'

Syriza championed Greek nationalism, demanding billions of dollars in reparations from Germany for occupation and forced loans during World War II.

Greece "leaves behind five years of humiliation and anguish," Tsipras told thousands of supporters in Athens as the election results came in.

"A Syriza victory will break the bad spell and liberate markets," he told Reuters Dec. 18, promising the Greek propertied rulers he had no intention of challenging capitalism.

Tsipras and new Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis toured European capitals to press for relief from the memorandum. They were rebuffed. The European Central Bank declared Feb. 5 it would stop accepting Greek bonds as collateral for central bank loans, cutting off access to low-interest borrowing.

In the crucible of the crisis, right and left currents in bourgeois politics are converging. Identifying with Syriza's anti-EU campaign, Marine LePen, leader of the right-wing National Front party in France, said that in the absence of a strong right-wing party in Greece, Syriza is her party there.

The German rulers face a predicament. If they maintain the onerous conditions of the memorandum, Greece may default on its debt and leave the European Union. The wealthy bondholders fear that "contagion" could spread to Spain, Ireland, Portugal and other countries on the wrong end of social relations in Europe. But they also fear those countries rulers would demand the equivalent of any concessions they might make to Athens.

Since the elections Tsipras has backtracked on campaign promises, hoping to find ground for some concession by Germany and the IMF. He calls for "fiscal space" to allow negotiations on restructuring the debt, and proposes that instead of taking the next troika bailout loan of \$7.9 billion, Greece will swap existing interest-paying bonds with "growth bonds" that pay only if the economy grows.

While Syriza's leaders, like many on Europe's bourgeois left and right, have been infatuated with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the new government backed off its opposition to EU sanctions against Russia in another concession to European creditors.

It remains to be seen if Greece will stay in the European Union, leave or be expelled, and if it will default on or restructure the onerous debt that expresses the domination of more powerful capitalists.

What is certain is that workers and farmers will continue to bear the brunt.

NY rail disaster

Continued from front page
are just accidents."

Pressed on why steps aren't being taken to eliminate ground-level crossings and replace them with under- or overpasses, Cuomo told Time Warner channel NY1, "In theory it's a nice idea. In practicality, do we have the money, do we have the time? And is it one of the top priority safety projects? I would say no."

Since 2003 there have been 260 grade-crossing "accidents" on the three commuter rail systems that serve the greater New York City area — Metro-North, New Jersey Transit and the Long Island Rail Road. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, 73 people were killed and 148 injured.

After a crossing gate came down on the SUV, Brody apparently pulled forward into the path of the crowded train, according to Robert Sumwalt of the National Transportation Safety Board. The train's engineer, Steven Smalls, slammed on the brakes, but it was too late.

Smalls narrowly escaped being impaled when the third rail pierced the train. He helped evacuate passengers from the burning train and was later hospitalized for smoke inhalation.

Metro-North only assigned two crew members to the train — Smalls and one conductor — who helped get passengers off all eight cars.

The crash took place during the evening rush hour at an intersection near a highway entrance. Red lights and crossing gates had been installed there after a deadly crash in 1984 in which a train struck a vehicle. State transportation officials planned five years ago to install an additional set of lights to give drivers more warning of approaching trains, but never did.

Regular commuters have told the press they consider the crossing dangerous. Lance Sexton, an electronic equipment assembler who lives in Valhalla, told the *New York Times*, "We know that coming down the hill ... you have to put the brakes on earlier." He said he worries about how soon the trains pass after the gates come down. Of the driver who found herself on the tracks, Sexton said, "It happens."

At her funeral Feb. 6, Alan Brody said his wife had been driving in an unfamiliar area. He said he had once been there and "remember thinking, 'Are you kidding?' Who could imagine that a major commuter railroad runs through this?"

Ending grade crossings not a priority

Nationwide, only 15 percent of the more than 250,000 locations where railroad tracks and roadways intersect have a bridge or underpass to separate the tracks from cars and pedestrians. There are about 270 deaths a year at public and private grade crossings in the United States. On average, someone is hit by a train every three hours.

This is not just a U.S. problem. Roughly one person a day is killed by trains at grade crossings in Europe. Some 15,000 people are killed each year trying to cross railroad tracks in India, especially in crowded working-class areas in the country's major cities. In Mumbai alone 6,000 people are killed each year.

"No civilized society can accept such a massacre on their railway system," said a 2012 report by the High Level Safety Review Committee, which was set up by the Indian government after outcry against the massive number of deaths on the tracks. The report laid the blame squarely on the railway bosses.

Every single one of these killings is preventable by installing under- or overpasses.

Worsening working conditions on the job and growing danger to communities along train routes are sparking workers to fight back on U.S. railroads. Last September, trainmen and engineers on the BNSF Railway overwhelmingly rejected a proposal from the bosses to cut train crews to one person.

There have been several serious incidents on Metro-North in the last couple years, including a December 2013 derailment in the Bronx that killed four passengers and injured 70. A report by the Federal Railroad Administration on that so-called accident said Metro-North management had a "deficient safety culture."